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NEW HAVEN

ITS ORIGIN
AND HISTORY







NEWHAVEN

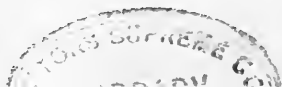
ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

BY MRS. G. CUPPLES



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CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND EARLY PROGRESS.

LOOKING back into old Scottish history for some sign of the existence of this now well-known fishing village, or town, as it is in reality entitled to be called, we find that under King James III.'s reign, that is to say, fully four hundred years ago, it does not seem to have been then even so much as a sea-side hamlet, from which boats were in the habit of being put forth into the Frith, and of being brought back for regular accommodation. At that period Leith itself was but a small town, with comparatively little trade, over which Edinburgh exercised a jealous con-

trol, keeping it down as much as possible. Westward from there, up the southern shore of the Frith of Forth, the nearest harbour was then Blackness, which ranked as sea-port for Linlithgow, where royalty often held chief court; and lying convenient for Queensferry, as it did, that now obscure village obtained farther importance from its facilities of communication with 'The Kingdom of Fife' and northern districts in general. Blackness accordingly appears to have been then the 'Old Haven,' in contrast to that with which we are here concerned. Soon after 1488, when James IV. began to reign, he found that a considerable gathering of fishermen's cottages, and even of better houses, had taken place on the shore directly northward from Edinburgh, and west about a mile from Leith, where so much industry and apparent enterprise became visible as to attract His Majesty's favourable notice.

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He established a rope-walk for the manufacture of ropes and cables, and built houses for the accommodation of artificers, and erected a building-yard and a dock for ships, and endowed the village 'with certain burgal privileges.' The town-council of Edinburgh, however, entertaining fears about its rising consequence, in 1511 purchased from King James a formal property over this little town and harbour, with all their rights and advantages, which property is still retained by our metropolis. Contemporaneously with his favour toward this place, James had built a chapel there for the accommodation of his shipwrights and others, dedicated to St. Mary, from which sacred edifice the little haven used to be long called 'Our Lady's Port of Grace.' Hence it was afterwards, for a considerable time, very generally styled Maryport. There are also various historical indications to show that it

became in no small degree a place of importance for crossing over to Fife at Burntisland, or, as that town was formerly called, Wester Kinghorn. According to more than one of our old annalists, the year 1511 was rendered famous by the commencement of 'ane varie monstrous great schip, called the *Michael*,' constructed by King James's orders 'between Newhaven and Leith,' which vessel took many years in building, was 'twelve-score feet long, and sixty-six feet wide, being ten feet thick in each wall,' costing His Majesty £30,000, and being afterwards commanded by Sir Andro Wood of Largo, in Fife, who manned her with 300 sailors besides officers, 120 gunners, and 1000 soldiers. Thereafter, along with Sir Andro Barton, he did numerous exploits against hostile powers with this ship. One of those said enemies was Holland—but, it should be observed, Holland under despotic

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Spanish rule — which had committed piratical ravage upon Scottish vessels belonging to fishermen as well as to merchants. Flodden's disastrous battle in 1513 put an end to gallant King James IV.'s patronage, and under his son James V. a charter of date 1526 was granted to some Prestongrange monks, nine miles farther out seaward, to construct a port within their own lands, from which they might export coal which they had been ingenious enough to discover there. These monks forthwith made a harbour in their small bay, which they were at first allowed to call New-haven, as if altogether eclipsing and setting aside the western town which James IV. had so greatly cherished. Their rivalry, nevertheless, did not last long, and they soon were obliged to let their diminutive hamlet sink back into its original neglect, under title of Achieison's Haven, latterly altered to Morison's Haven, a name

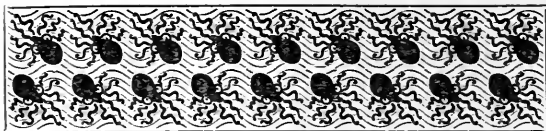
taken from mere private proprietorship. Some considerable jealousy continued to exist between genuine Newhaven men and those of Prestonpans, during many successive years ; which culminated long afterwards in a dispute about certain oyster scalps, and 'on more than one occasion produced violent language, if not actual bloodshed, when the opposite parties met at work afloat.' Ultimately Newhaven obtained a legal decision in its favour, whereby this quarrel ended.

In 1544, English hostilities reached as far as Leith, which was set on fire. Even westward of Leith, past Newhaven, these calamities were felt ; and it appears to have been then that St. Mary's Chapel became a ruin, which for some time continued visible. Part of its ancient wall is even still to be seen, a mere fragment. On one side, the northern, of Main Street in Newhaven there is conspicuously to be

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seen a square green enclosure, long used as a burying-place, enclosed by some very old houses; and here, it is known, had been the spot where that ancient chapel once reared its decorated fabric, where priests officiated at high mass, choristers chaunted, and people worshipped, all of olden time.

Too much space would be required to mention what vicissitudes Newhaven underwent soon afterwards, during those well-known troubles which accompanied our great Scottish Reformation, when Queen-Regent Mary of Lorraine contended vainly against John Knox, and when her fair but ill-starred daughter, Mary 'Queen of Scots,' followed that bad example. Enough to say, Newhaven became very early a thoroughly Protestant place, and this with a most sufficient reason which will require a few apposite sentences to make it obvious.



CHAPTER II.

LATER TIMES—A TRADITION—AND A
RECORD.

WELL-FOUNDED tradition, ever since a period even anterior to the Reformation, has always asserted that a Flemish colony gave this place its earliest vigour in regard of industrial success. As is well known, Flanders had been deeply oppressed by those bigoted measures which the Austrian Emperor, Charles v., as King of Spain, and therefore as Lord Paramount over all Netherlandish provinces, had taken to destroy civil freedom and religious liberty of conscience throughout his whole

vaſt dominion. Already, even then, numerous Flemings had taken refuge both in Scotland and in England, purſuing their former occupations there, and hereby conferring no flight advantage upon various Britiſh trades by their ſkill, their induſtry, and their well-conditioned habits. This ſaid immigration, no doubt, *then* occurred gradually, in ſmall detachments. But when that terrible royal fanatic, King Philip II. of Spain, ſucceeded his father there, his aggravated perfecution drove Flemiſh people in much larger numbers to our hospitable ſhores ; whither their tranſit was rendered eaſier by poſſeſſion of ſea-going craft, by maritime ſkill, and oftentimes by ſtormy winter weather, through which no Spaniſh veſſel could intercept them. Fiſhing was, to moſt of them, a habitual occupation. They reſumed it at once, upon landing ; their proverbial hardihood and diligence gave conſpicuous example to our own fiſhermen,

along with new modes of procedure, as well as additional thrift and shrewdness in obtaining a market.

As an indirect confirmation of this supposed Flemish origin, it should be noted that old traces of a foreign settlement were discovered some considerable time ago on the Isle of May; from whence, also, local tradition says that Newhaven was recruited by fishermen who had previously settled farther down to seaward. 'We have authentic documents' (says Tytler's History, i., 242), 'showing that even as early as David I.'s reign the Frith of Forth was often covered with boats manned by Scottish and English and *Belgic* (*i.e.*, Flemish) fishermen, who were attracted by abundance of fish near the Isle of May.' On that island, in very early times, a beacon-fire was kept burning, until the first lighthouse in Scotland was erected there.

It should also be noted, however, that

industrial pursuits had been previously checked in Scotland, as well as in England, by restrictive monopolies and ill-judged legislation, which drove away numerous people to the Netherlands; so that, in fact, when busy workmen and thrifty artisans took refuge here, Scotland was only receiving back a benefit she had before imparted.

That such an accession of strength was received by Newhaven in the shape of Flemish people—too numerous to be excluded—and this at some period about early Reformation times (1560-1570), is borne out by many circumstances. One among these is the institution, at least as early as 1572, of a ‘Free Fisherman’s Society,’ with careful rules and provisions for mutual benefit; wherein Newhaven men appear to have not only imitated those ‘Guilds’ which were so systematic among Flemish people, but also to have intended especially marking their own deliverance from under

Spanish despotism, and their being now above all things *Free*. To any one who is personally acquainted with their village ways, customs, idioms, family names, and costumes, it is often noticeable how much they resemble Flemish and Dutch fisher-folk. Even now-a-days we may observe this said resemblance in various points, such as their women's manifold petticoats, striped in contrasted colours; peculiar shortgowns, displaying bare arms with white elbow-bands; bright head-shawls, or, in the case of the elder women, peculiar white linen caps; trim stockings, conspicuously shown, and neat, serviceable shoes. To these add an especial household care for elaborate collections of 'crockery,' for furniture 'made to last,' and for making gradual provision against the time when their daughters shall leave home as brides. In complexion and general physique both sexes often exemplify an

old Flemish descent ; some being blonde, as any typical Netherlander ; some dark, as any typical Spaniard ; comparatively few intermediate. And among their children you may see, any day, broad-beamed little Dutchmen toddle across the street, costumed as if fresh from Flanders itself ; dear flaxen-haired wee lassies, whose doll-like cheeks and eyes carry out the picture : both being grouped at ends of narrow high-sided alleys, that are crossed overhead by clothes-lines strung with parti-coloured garments, and that are complicated by stretches of innumerable bladders, black and yellow, and red and piebald.

At that ever-memorable date, just three hundred years ago now (1588), a grand and signal occasion came for Newhaven ; of which the village made public record in a monumental form that can still be surveyed with due interest by visitors there. It began, indeed, with no small alarm. Their

old tyrant, King Philip II. of Spain, having taken it into his fanatical head to attack Protestant England under Queen Elizabeth's glorious reign, had been rash enough to prepare and send forth against her an immense fleet of huge ships of war. During some little time of anxious excitement the issue remained doubtful. But Philip had neither calculated on British weather, nor rightly estimated what could be done by alert English ships, with admirals like Sir Francis Drake and Lord Henry Seymour and Lord Howard, to command them. King Philip's grand 'Armada' came to grief, both from English guns and from stresses of wind and tide, until its dispersed ships were everywhere getting entangled among unknown dangers along our whole coast. Scotland was then, of course, an entirely separate kingdom; yet her Protestant sympathies were strong upon Queen Elizabeth's side. From Newhaven, as well as from several

other Scottish harbours, squadrons of active little vessels had been getting fitted out and manned by hardy crews, of sailors and of fishermen also, who now, by chasing and annoying and perplexing various scattered survivors of that grand invasive fleet, did much to complete the victory gained over it by England. And in this connection it is not inappropriate to repeat our notice of the fact, that Newhaven's earliest industrial energies had been due to emigrants from Flanders, whom despotic Spanish bigotry had forced to leave their native shores in order to seek refuge in Scotland, as in a country where religious and civic freedom could be enjoyed. Doubtless, it must have been with vivid recollection of wrongs done to their fellow-countrymen, if not to themselves individually, that many fishermen of Flemish descent sallied out from Newhaven on this retributive enterprise. They, in fact, considered its accomplishment to be

well worthy of a substantial and durable record within their own village precincts. As before stated, that same record continues to be visible there, in good condition, as kept up by periodical repair from time to time. It remains quite as intelligible and conspicuous as ever, in shape of a massive stone tablet, firmly placed on high, between two substantial houses of Main Street, Newhaven; facing direct seaward through a principal open space suitably called St. Andrew's Square—where stands midway a covered barometer, a public well, with other characteristic town-insignia, and where numerous fishermen of all ages are generally to be seen walking their very short turns of 'three-steps-and-over-board.' The piers,—now vastly extended beyond their original ancient little jetty,—the biggest boats in their enclosed harbour, and the tall lighthouse, are all plainly in view from before this notable monument; almost

up to which, when a strong north-easterly gale is blowing, the spray of salt water from out of the German Ocean comes with an intermittent splash and a shower that make every passenger hasten on. The monument itself¹ deserves a few words of description.

It is surmounted by an outspread Scottish thistle of most thoroughly bristling character, with our national motto of '*Nemo me impune lacesset*' engraved on a scroll; and the date 1588. Immediately beneath is figured a large three-masted galley of unwieldy-looking and foreign aspect, with a Romish cross on a pennon at each mast-head. Next comes a transverse band, showing this legend in capital letters: 'IN THE NEAM OF GOD.' Underneath this again, in a separate framed compartment, are various quaintly-symbolic divisions, well carved and made unmistakable—a quadrant, an anchor, with a pair of

¹ See back of cover.

compasses and a marlinspike athwart it; then also a broken ship's spar and a serving-mallet, beneath which are two globes, geographical and astronomical; while, lastly, below all, on another transverse band, runs this somewhat-unintelligible Latin sentence, — 'PER VERTVTI SIDERA TERRAM MARE.' Whether owing to its original sculptor, whose work was undoubtedly good, or owing to its modern repairers, this Latin scroll seems by no means of a merit equal with its artistic surroundings, but it may be taken to signify: 'Valour, guided by the stars, can traverse both land and sea.'

One traditional statement current in Newhaven is that its said curious monumental tablet had not been originally sculptured and placed there, but had been disinterred many years ago from Cramond '*riech*' ('burn')—about five miles westward—and brought along to be set up, in

commemorative honour, beside a house which was made illustrious by another cause. As regards the carved stone slab, and Newhaven's alleged part in harassing hostile Spanish ships, some corroborative evidence may be inferred from what Mr. James Grant says in his valuable work, '*Old and New Edinburgh*' (vol. iii. p. 306) — 'During operations for Granton Railway, near Wardie, 27th September 1844, a silver and a copper coin of Philip II. of Spain were found among a quantity of human bones, intermingled with sand and shells; and these relics were at the time supposed to form a memento of some great galleon of the Spanish Armada, cast away upon that rocky coast.' As regards the house, on account of which the stone was brought along, this substantial old edifice is said to be the very same into which Queen Mary went for rest and refreshment on that well-known historical occasion when she crossed


‘the Ferry’ after escaping from Loch-Leven castle, before she mounted her horse to ride on toward Niddry, followed by her train. This was in May of 1568, just twenty years before Spain sent forth its hostile ‘Armada.’ And these two signal events appear to have been connected, naturally enough, by Newhaven people of that period.





CHAPTER III.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT—LOCAL PATRIOTISM—H.M.S. 'TEXEL.'

 T one time Newhaven had grassy links both east and west of the village, but through the great encroachments of the sea these have been swept away, with the exception of the enclosure at the foot of the Whale Brae, called The Free Fishermen's Park. The Whale Brae took its name, no doubt, from 'ane little whale' coming ashore close to this road, an event of very rare occurrence, therefore worthy of remembrance. The sea made sad havoc, in stormy weather, on the coast between Leith and Newhaven,

and until the strong bulwarks were built at Annfield the road was often undermined and washed away. Even after this the path between the Fort and the point at Annfield was extremely dangerous and long known as the Man-Trap, the road being so narrow and dangerous that people at night ran a risk of their lives; and when heavy storms visited the Frith, this part of the coast suffered greatly, and was the scene of more than one wreck.

It was not till 1793 that the net herring-fishing began in the Frith of Forth, it being supposed that when the herrings left the shore near the mouth of the Frith they had gone away to other waters, no attempt being made to seek them farther up the estuary. The discovery was made accidentally, near Donnibristle, by Thomas Brown, who had been for years wont to fish with hook and line for haddocks and podlies near the shore, and who found the

herrings in such numbers that he took them up in buckets. Next, the fishermen of Queensferry began to set their nets with a result that astonished them; and, very soon after, their success excited attention generally, and this fishing has been followed with perseverance and good fortune by all fishermen of the east coast. To this circumstance may be attributed Lady Nairn's production of that exquisitely appropriate song, 'Caller Herrin', which thus poetically expresses what we have so often heard in more prosaic sound from our buxom fishwives:—

Wha 'll buy my caller herrin' ?
They 're bonnie fish and hale some farin' ;
Wha 'll buy my caller herrin'
New drawn frae the Forth ?

When ye were sleepin' on your pillows,
Dreamed ye aught o' our puir fellows,
Darkling as they faced the billows,
A' to fill the woven willows?
Buy my caller herrin'
New drawn frae the Forth !

Wha 'll buy my caller herrin' ?
Oh, ye may ca' them vulgar farin' ;
Wives and mithers, maist despairin' ,
Ca' them lives o' men !

During the old war with France, the patriotism of the Newhaven fishermen was prominent on more than one occasion, and they were among the first to offer their services as a marine force to guard their native coast against the enemy. So much was this appreciated that the President of the 'Newhaven Free Fishermen's Society' was presented with a handsome silver cup, medal, and chain, by the Duke of Buccleuch, in presence of several county gentlemen. On one side, this medal, which is still preserved at Newhaven, bears this inscription: 'In testimony of the brave and patriotic offer of the fishermen of Newhaven to defend the coast against the enemy, this mark of approbation was voted by the county of Midlothian,

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November 2d, 1796.' On the reverse is the thistle, with the national motto, and the legend *Agmine Remorum Celeri* (By their swift band of oars). This medal the boxmaster wears, in virtue of his office, when the Society has its annual procession through Leith, Granton, and Trinity. This body is very exclusive; no strangers, or others than lawful descendants of members, inheriting the privileges of membership—a distinguishing feature that has endured for ages. The main object for which the Society was formed seems to have been the relief and maintenance of the poor of the village of Newhaven. By a bond, which is still extant, entered into with the Minister and Kirk-Session of North Leith, the 'Sailors and Fishermen of Newhaven agree that any new incomer into this corporation shall pay eight pounds Scots (a pound Scots was 1s. 8d. sterling) into the box for the relief of the poor,' and

they farther pledge themselves to renew this obligation as often as they are called upon to do so. From that time till the passing of the Poor-Law Act the poor of Newhaven were relieved from this source; and the boxmaster might be seen any day standing at the end of the village watching over the collections which were dropped into a box by passers who were invited by a large placard to 'help the poor of Newhaven.'

Besides relieving the destitute, the Society had the guardianship of the rights and privileges of its members. These rights are to dredge and fish in certain waters, which were conferred on its members; and many a sturdy fight has the Society had to maintain against the encroachments of powerful individuals and wealthy corporations who sought to wrest from it its ancient privileges. Notwithstanding the powerful opposition it had to

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contend with, the Society has maintained an honourable existence through a long and arduous struggle. Their brave and patriotic offer, made by the fishermen of Newhaven to form themselves into a marine force, shows they were ready to fight 'on board of any gunboat or vessel of war that Government might appoint' between the Red Head of Angus and St. Abb's Head, 'and to go farther if necessity urges.' The Lord Provost and Magistrates of Edinburgh in the following year proceeded to Newhaven and presented the fishermen with a handsome stand of colours in testimony of their loyalty, after a suitable prayer by the venerable Dr. Johnston of North Leith. Formed now into the Sea Fencibles, besides keeping watch and ward upon the coast, in 1806 two hundred of them volunteered to man H.M.S. *Texel*, 64-gun two-decker, under Captain Donald Camp-

bell, R.N.; and, proceeding to sea from Leith Roads, gave chase to some French frigates, by which the coast of Scotland had been infested, and which had inflicted depredations on our shipping. Thus manned and navigated, H.M.S. *Texel* in 1807 captured a French frigate named *La Neydenne*, bringing her as prize-of-war into Yarmouth Roads; after which they came home to Newhaven with great *éclat*. For this service they received an autograph letter from His Majesty George III., expressing his satisfaction at their loyalty; and a gratuity from the city of Edinburgh, of £250. For years afterwards it was the pride of these old salts, who are now sleeping near the ruined wall of 'Our Lady's' and St. James's Chapel, to recur to the days 'when *I* was aboard of the *Texel*.'



CHAPTER IV.

REMINISCENCES.

IT is in the writer's recollection that, when staying with an old uncle who took summer-quarters near Newhaven, she was taken to see its old churchyard; and peeped into a small cellar-like building called 'The dead-house.' Here it had been customary for men of Newhaven, whose relatives were buried in that ground, to watch all night during six weeks, lest 'resurrectionists' might enter it for their foul work. Not a few of uncle's strangest stories, which were mingled with 'eerie' and spectral incidents, had been got by

him from these watchers in old St Mary's ruined mortuary.

In thus looking back, there are two very different sets of quaint recollections that come to mind.

First, naturally enough, come those which are associated with that grass-grown ancient enclosure, just now referred to. When a funeral took place, it was very noticeable how the coffin was borne along, in crowded procession, on poles held by the chief mourners; and how, as it passed within the said old burying-ground, each follower dropped into a plate beside the entrance his contribution in silver, its purpose being to defray all necessary expenses. Occasions there were, too, when something more mournful than even a funeral would occur, and its memory cannot but recur to any one who has stayed for however short a time in Newhaven. This was, we need scarcely say, when disastrous news of

some boat had come in, and when it became very doubtful whether the husband and father could ever be brought home to let his body rest there in that quiet spot; indeed when it most probably turned out to be certain that the unquiet depths of the sea would hold his remains until it at last should give up its dead. And it is in this reference that a children's rhyme, often to be heard among little girls at play along Newhaven streets, sounds most touchingly. We listened to it with that feeling a day or two ago, for it says—

Ding-dong knell,
The passing bell !
And good-bye to you, my darling !
Bury me in yon old churchyard,
Beside my own dear mother."

Here one could not but be struck with a thought of the frequent uncertainty about where their fathers lay. Thus it went on—

My coffin shall be black,
Six angels at my back,
Two to sing and two to pray,
Two to carry my soul away.

A tradition of St Mary's Roman-Catholic funerals appeared thus to keep running through those childrens' simple lilt while they sported together ; and various other similar chants might be quoted.

Marriages in Newhaven have their own quaint, old-fashioned, almost foreign, peculiarities. As when, for example, a bride is seen going about with her bridesmaid, both in full dress, some days before her marriage takes place ; while she invites her chosen guests to the wedding. On the evening of the wedding-day itself, the house is packed to the door with numerous relations and friends, every inch of space being utilised to hold the children, all in full dress down to the youngest baby, and their faces extra bright with the scrubbing of soap

and water, administered by mother, or granny, or auntie; the goodwife of the house dressed out in snod white satin cap, handsome dark satin gown, which in some cases 'could stand alone' for richness, and covered with a serviceable homely blue-and-white striped apron over all. She bids each guest welcome with the air of a duchess, assisted in her happy though arduous task by her husband, rigged out in his best holiday suit, but minus his coat, an arrangement that enables any stranger to see at once amidst the motley throng who *is* the goodman of the house. The whole scene is of a kind to diffuse something of geniality through the most crabbed person who has been fortunate enough to obtain an invitation. Their hearty ways and cordial words are such as take us back in imagination to olden times.

Meanwhile, the men who have been bidden to the feast are going round in

elaborate dress — white trousers, velvet waistcoats, and bright-buttoned blue coats — to fetch the bridegroom with all due form. After the ceremony is over, and the cake cut by the minister, and the bride's health proposed, things are set in order for a public procession along the street to that particular Inn (now more fashionably termed 'Hotel') where festivities are to be carried on until daybreak, in honour of so happy an occasion. During this procession the bride goes in front along with 'the best man,' whose hat is festooned with ample white streamers, the bridegroom coming next along with the bridesmaid; all others following in due order, as relationship or rank in life may prescribe. An old ballad, of local origin, commemorates such Newhaven weddings as follows:—

Weel, Friday cam', the growing moon
Shone beautifully clear;
An' a' the boats wi' flags were drest,
Frae Annfield to the pier.

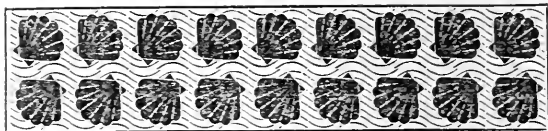
An' Doctor Johnston, worthy man,
Had twa-three hours to spare ;
Sae he toddled to Newhaven,
An' spliced the happy pair.

A late able English novelist, Mr. Charles Reade, wrote a story founded on what he thought to be life in Newhaven, near which he had spent some autumn weeks; and he made his heroine, Christie Johnstone, to represent its young fisher lasses. Most unfortunately, however, he described her as taken out in a boat at night, either up or down the Frith, to work at the herring-nets along with others. Besides which, there were absurdities of speech, of manners, and of general conduct, too numerous to mention in detail. Few persons have taken sufficient trouble to be competent for due representation of these peculiar village ways, nor do we pretend to have done so. But yet, not to mention other points, there is one upon which we

would lay stress; and this is, in our opinion, the marked amount of genuine true heartedness that exists among these people as regards social relationships, marriage ties, and all those preliminary engagements which lead up to marriage. After having seen not a little of what goes on in various districts throughout Scotland, we may safely say that Newhaven can compare to advantage with most other villages in these all-important respects.

As concerns good-fellowship between man and man, a striking incident has been brought to our knowledge. A friend of our informant told how he himself came across some Newhaven men at work on the Irish coast, who, having entrusted their joint week's-earnings to one of their number for safe conveyance to bank in an adjacent town, were deeply disappointed by his return with a woeful tale of misadventure. He had been enticed into a

tavern on his way, then plied with liquor, and robbed of their money while unconscious. Singular to relate, his boatmates were so moved by his extreme distress and contrition that, instead of even reproaching him, they with one accord let the matter drop into complete silence. Nor is this a solitary instance. Both among the women and the men there is much stress laid on what may be called 'chumming,' or close companionship between two of the same sex; according to which, from early schooldays, they pair off into a faithful copartnery, as it were, that lasts throughout life. The one girl becomes bridesmaid to the other if she gets first married; each considers it her duty to help or to attend to her 'chum' in time of need, and curious examples might be given, did our space allow.



CHAPTER V.

VILLAGE RECORDS—ITS MINISTERS— THEIR INFLUENCE.

NEWHAVEN has been long favoured by having a succession of faithful evangelical ministers, who have done much to consolidate good-fellowship and to keep up a high standard of conduct, as well as to diffuse Christian knowledge; not only so, but likewise, moreover, to promote the material welfare of the community.

It was not until half-a-century ago that this village had any church of its own to fill the blank that had been left when old St. Mary's Chapel fell into ruins. After

the Reformation had established itself throughout Scotland, the inhabitants of Newhaven were dependent for religious services upon the chapel of St. Ninian's at North Leith. In modern times, during no less than fifty-nine years (1765-1824), the Rev. Dr. David Johnston was minister of North Leith parish, and at his church there always continued to be a numerous attendance of Newhaven people; among whom very tender and grateful memories of that excellent pastor remained after his death in 1824. From a memoir of his life, written by his grand-daughter (Mrs. A. F. Foster), and published in 1878, we extract one or two interesting passages.

'Coming into the parish when it was still thinly peopled, this good pastor became personally acquainted with all the members of his flock. He identified himself with their interests as though they had been his own; and if anything could be done to help any of them in

trouble, it appears never to have become a question with him whether it lay on him to assist. Throughout a great part of his time among them they were exposed to those dangers and distresses which trouble a maritime population during foreign war. In 1779 they were alarmed by the approach of the notorious Paul Jones, now usually characterised as a rebel pirate. This man's grandfather had kept a public garden near Leith, and had himself probably become acquainted with its town and harbour in his boyhood . . . In September of that year he had formed a design of coming upon Leith and forcing a contribution from it, as well as of carrying off some fine vessels . . . As is well known, when Jones's Squadron was near Kirkcaldy, the Rev. Mr. Shirra, minister there, repaired to its beach, when, surrounded by a far more numerous congregation than he could have gathered in his church, he fervently prayed that "this wicked enterprise might be frustrated." Scarcely had he ended before a strong westerly gale rose, which saved both Kirkcaldy and Leith from choice of a heavy ransom or destruction by fire . . . Dangers of this kind continued; for in 1803, when Bonaparte's invasion was threatened, Dr. Johnston earnestly exhorted his

people, not only to pray, but to become volunteers for national defence; this brave old man of sixty-nine years proposing to be himself one of their number.'

Those were days when strict religious discipline, over families and individuals, continued to be still possible. Of this fact we see various odd records taken from Kirk-Session books. As, for example, from among cases earlier than Dr. Johnston's time:—

There were officers appointed by parochial authority to hunt out offences against Sabbath observance, above all with regard to church hours; to take note of any who might then be idling about, or otherwise breaking decent rule. There was also a magistrate expressly appointed for trying such misdemeanour, and a lock-up beside South Leith church for those condemned to incarceration on account of impiety. It is questionable whether any other parish in Scotland had an equal provision of church police; and it appears from extant documents that North Leith had

this advantage—if advantage it was—beyond most districts; forasmuch as ‘the church-bailie held regular court at Newhaven for trying those who deflected from proper behaviour, and from religious as well as moral good conduct.’ Another singular record is that ‘Alexander Brown was fined £5 for letting a house to a man who had no testimonials.’ Keepers of lodging-houses were interdicted from letting beds to strangers until their testimonials had been approved by some elder of their former district; while house-owners were under similar restraint as to acceptance of tenants. An old Kirk-Session entry, of 1605, even bears record that ‘Janet Merlin, and Margaret Cook, her mother, made public repentance for keeping a bairn unbaptized in their house for about twenty weeks, and for calling it Janet.’ Another runs thus—‘Compeared Marion Anderson for craving curses and maledictions on the pastor and his family, without any offence done by him or his,’—she being ordered to go to her place of offence and crave mercy of God. And further, the session—‘understanding her to be an old offender against Christian morals,’ ordered her never to appear again within their bounds, under pain of being put, *toties quoties*, in the jogis (jougs or iron collar).’

Things have changed vastly for the better since those days, as has already been indicated. For this evident progress the district is beyond question largely indebted to Dr. Johnston's long-continued labours and Gospel preaching. In 1838 Newhaven got a new church to itself, which owed its celebrity and marked success to the well-known Rev. Dr. Fairbairn. In 1843 he joined the Disruption movement, which at once added another new church to the village, where, it is needless to tell our readers, he long and very usefully ministered.

The great majority of his congregation were fishermen and their families, who were always keenly sensible of the mode in which he prayed for those who were exposed to the dangers of the deep. Perhaps the most useful of his philanthropic schemes was that of the reconstruction of the Newhaven fishing fleet. He perceived

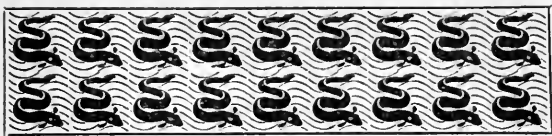
early that the boats in use were wholly unfitted for modern requirements, and some years before his death he brought forward a plan for replacing them by others having decks, bunks, and other compartments. Thirty-three large new boats, each costing about £250, with as much more for fishing-gear, were the result of his kindly labours. They have all been prosperous, and hundreds of the inhabitants of Newhaven, when they stood around his grave, remembered what they owed to the large-hearted and prudent benevolence of their old minister. Dr. Fairbairn had an energetic coadjutor, and a kindred fellow-worker, in the Rev. William Graham, who had succeeded him in the *quoad sacra* established church. There was no scheme for the mutual benefit of this village, and for its moral and religious welfare, into which Mr. Graham did not throw all his characteristic zeal. He won an affectionate

regard from all his own flock, while, at the same time, those who worshipped elsewhere held him in thorough esteem as a faithful preacher and a true friend to their best interests. His doctrine was genuinely evangelical, and his oratory often eloquent. Much was done by him to improve and beautify the handsome edifice in which he ministered. Between him and his neighbour ministers there existed to the end an entire cordiality of intercourse, and of joint action. He, too, was followed to the grave by a large concourse of those who knew his worth and sincerely mourned his loss.

Newhaven now enjoys the advantage of having had those useful men succeeded by others who enter with heart and soul into every plan for the best interests of the whole community. Fresh agencies have been set agoing by them, and new plans, suited to the progressive spirit of the day,

have within these last few years been initiated at their immediate suggestion, for the thorough success of which, and for tangible results in consequence, there is every reason to hope.





CHAPTER VI.

DAYS DEPARTED—AULD LANG SYNE—

A NEWHAVEN POEM.

WHO is there among our numerous Edinburgh neighbours, at least among those of middle age, that does not associate peculiarly pleasant recollections with a Newhaven 'fishwife's' cry, as it sounded melodious along some quiet square or hollow lane, perhaps late of an evening, when streets began to empty of ordinary traffic, but when concert-audiences were dispersing, soirées breaking up, and evening theatre-leavers hastening home? 'Caller ou—ooh' was how it used to sound

to us of yore, when it had its time of prosperity. But now, alas! its occupation is almost gone. There are only two—and stalwart, gaucy, characteristic specimens they are—who carry up oysters into town, making use of that wild and seabird-like, yet most musical, cry. An oyster is now-a-days a thing of rarity. Times were, long past, when ‘schoolboys would buy a dozen for a half-penny at their luncheon hour, swallow them in quick succession as they were opened, and then pertly close by giving the fishwife a kiss in exchange for a thirteenth oyster.’

Then, again, we are told by Edinburgh gentlemen with what almost classical or at least poetical sentiment they look back upon Saturday afternoons when, having left business quite alone for the week, they used to come down and have ‘a fish dinner in Newhaven.’ Scattered all over the world, it is certain, there are many other such

upholders of a kindly reminiscence of the old seaside village before it became so environed by genteel suburban residences and flowery villas. 'At Greig's inn, opposite the Chain Pier, you remember?' was what we heard one American-looking traveller ask another, while they thus alluded to bygone jollities; and the reply was something to this effect,—'No, it was Clark's, at "The Peacock," farther along.' Whatever questionable influences may be connected with this said line of recollection now-a-days, when our moral sense has too often been troubled by it, there can at any rate be no doubt that a wide interest consequently attaches to the place. The other day, when a movement was being proposed to renovate 'The Free Fishermen's Society' there, we were cordially told by various friends how much they approved of it, and this just because of many an enjoyment received beside those

Newhaven fands and piers and quaint old houfes, which, indeed, are now no longer what they ufed to be in ‘auld lang fyne.’

Here we would fain have introduced various appropriate anecdotes, incidents, and even ftories, that illuftrate what our hardy fifher-folk in fober earneft are. But our fpace is exhausted; ftill we would afk for them a continuance of kindly intereft, becaufe—

‘ Ah, little ken ye gentle folks, wha grudge the price o’ fifh,
 O’ the rifin o’ the bree;
 An’ little think ye, leddies gay, that hae your every wifh,
 O’ the dangers o’ the fea.
 Oh liften to the mothers’ cries; oh, hear the wail o’ wives,
 An’ mind, that to provide your fare, men facrifice their
 lives.

Oh, the wailing o’ the bree,
 Oh, the fooghin’ o’ the fea.
 Oh, hearken to the widow’s cry—
 Send my laddies back to me.’

We muft clofe by giving fome remarkable verfes written many years ago by an

inhabitant of the place in connection with one of its oldest traditions. This poem, furnished by the kindness of a lady resident in Newhaven, speaks for itself, as telling a tale of Willow Bank, near Whale Brae.

‘THE LEGEND OF THE WILLOW TREE.’

We're on a bank that overlooks the sea,
And *that* is overlooked by a hoary Willow Tree,
Whose huge trunk throws aloft to the bright or
stormy sky
Whole waves of trembling spray-like leaves, each
leaf a twinkling eye ;
This was the fishers' landmark, when belated on
the flood,
Long ere the pier 'tween him and dark destruc-
tion stood ;
When the landsman lays him down on his feather
bed at night,
Then the fisher hoists his sail to the Borealis
light,

And sweeping like a sea-gull, how soon he 's far
away,

Where the mirk is settling down on the distant
Isle of May.

Away! away! they follow on, each light and
open bark

Glides on till each is lost in the wild and solid dark.

O who can tell if ever they shall see their homes
again,

O who but shudders now, at the howling wind
and rain ;

When the savage squall comes roaring, like a
lion for its prey,

And none can see his neighbour's boat in the
foaming dashing spray.

Brave hearts, strong hands, we 're floating yet, for
all that 's come and gone,

Our fathers lived through nights like these, so
shall each father's son ;

Let the stormy ocean bluster, we yet shall live
to see

The boulders on Newhaven shore, and its mighty
Willow Tree.

The Willow Tree, the Willow Tree, shall heave
upon our fight,
With a finny freight beneath us, and above the
morning light.
And God be praised, we'll win our bread, as
blythely and as free,
As long as leaves shall grow on that ancient
Willow Tree.
We know a spaewife prophesied 'when *that*
tree shall decay,
The open sea-boat fishing trade shall also die away;
The Saxons' decked and deep-well'd bark
Shall bound o'er the Forth like a fisher's ark,
And as full of all living things, they say.'
But oh, heave O, so boldly, boys, that can't be
in our day.

There's a story told about that tree, how a hun-
dred years ago,
Not a twig grew on that broken bank, where
the monster tree stands now,
And how a lovely fisher lass, with her bonnie
bairn asleep,

Weel happit, cradled in her *scull*¹, fat looking
o'er the deep,
From a hollow in that broken bank where she
was wont to play
With the lad she 's fondly watching, as his fail
flies fast away.
The western wind's now northern, and the waves
roll towards the land,
And the moaning sea announces that a stormy
night's at hand;
And sudden, fierce, and furious, the blast comes
ravelling on,
And north-by-east the wind and rain on Inch-
keith is thundering down;
Surging and wrestling, in the yet unwaning light,
She saw his nut-brown fail go down, and down
she sunk with fright.
Beside her sleeping bairn she swooned, at that
sad and fearsome fight;
And the plashing rain and driving fleet gave place
to drifting snow,

¹ The wicker basket carried on the top of the creel, and sometimes used as a cradle.

And the lovely wife and blooming bairn were
smooored far far below ;

They never awoke, they never were seen ; and
his corpse, it never was found.

And long e'er the snow had melted away, the
light and crumbling ground

Of that hollowed-out bank had covered them,
darkly o'er and o'er ;

And the long grafs and the blue-bells grew just
as e'er before.

Save that the osier cradle had sent forth

A sturdy shoot, a plant of worth,

That seemed to defy the blasting north ;

For high and wide and strong it grew,

A landmark to many a weary crew ;

Waving its leafy pennons in air,

Long after all other trees were bare.

And higher, and wider, and stronger it grew ;

But the story was only known to a few,

Who thought more than talked of that mystery,

Of the birth of that mighty Willow Tree.

Michael Wilshere,
Newhaven, March, 1847.













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